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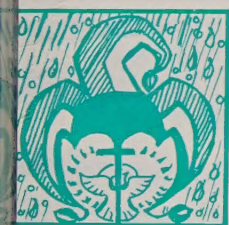
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Brother Mickey - 'Fool for God' - a brother's alter ego



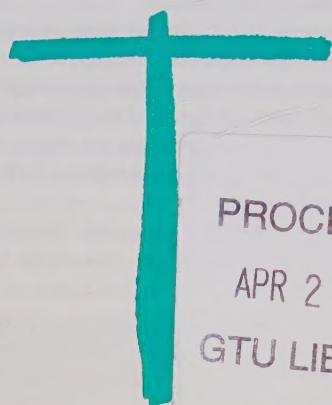
## The tragedy behind the smile

by Graham Harvey

When television viewers were invited to vote for their favourite comedy moment of all time they chose a scene from the classic sitcom Dad's Army. It is the episode where Corporal Jones, Sergeant Wilson, Privates Pike, Godfrey and the rest of the gang somehow manage to capture an enemy U-boat crew. The German commander tries to question them. He wants to know who they are and to which unit they belong. Pike, the youngest member of our Home Guard heroes, looks as though he may crack and give away too much. So the doughty Captain Mainwaring, ever cool under fire, steps forward with a word of warning. "Don't tell 'em your name, Pike," he snaps. With a triumphant smile, the U-boat commander enters Pike's name in his notebook.

Quite why this moment of stupidity should be so beloved of the British TV audience is not easy to work out. It's true: the pompous Mainwaring has been made to look a fool once more, but you would hardly call it the joke of

the century. So why is it we have this fascination for the British buffoon, the idiotic, the terminally incompetent? Captain Mainwaring is the archetypal comic toff. Conceited, puffed up, oblivious to the



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## Funny Bones

### Humour:

*a means of*

*communication, an aid to making life bearable, a channel for creating a cathartic experience, a way of facing that which is in essence tragic, an effective way to challenge others.*

Our contributors explore these issues, acknowledging the crucial rôle humour plays in our lives in terms of our own self-awareness and growth, but most particularly in our relationships with one another and with God.

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sensitivities and needs of those around him, he is a caricature of the remote, unfeeling boss. He is the person we would all hate to work for. By the end of the first week we would probably want to kill him. So why is this ludicrous anti-hero such a durable character? He is, after all, no more than a re-invention of the Oliver Hardy we remember from the 40s and 50s.

One reason may be that we enjoy seeing the authority figure get his come-uppance. We can be sure his arrogance and insensitivity will sooner or later get him into trouble and then we shall be there to see him put down. We watch simply because we like seeing toffs get humiliated.

But there is another possible reason, an altogether more noble one. For all his bluff and bluster, there is more than a dash of the tragic hero about the Mainwaring character. Let's face it: people like him are born to have a hard time. Whenever he contemptuously dismisses a suggestion from one of his long-suffering troops, we know he is going to pay the price for his arrogance. Whenever he embarks on some hopelessly over-optimistic exercise to impress the local brigade commander, we can relax in the certain knowledge that he will end up with egg on his face. Yet, through it all, he remains the undaunted optimist, believing implicitly in his little rag-tag army, confident that – with the right training and the right leadership – they will be more than a match for the finest German storm-troopers. And if it ever comes to a fight you can be sure Captain Mainwaring will cheerfully die for his men. So while he remains a buffoon, he has a touch of hero about him. And in my book that makes him, not a comic, but a tragic figure.

*We expect our lives to be filled with love, beauty and laughter, but it isn't . . . growing up for most of us is about compromise, settling for less than the ideal, making the best of a pretty mediocre job.*

*But, unlike us, our comic heroes refuse to compromise.*

One of my earliest comic heroes was the radio and TV star Tony Hancock. Here was another comedian whose performance seemed riven with self-parody and the bitter mirth of tragedy. Though his head was filled with thoughts of the heroic, he remained trapped in a world of mediocrity. He longed for adventure, for excitement. He dreamed of life as a test pilot, as an explorer, as a fearless espionage agent. But those dreams were confined within the net curtains and flock

wallpapers of 23 Railway Cuttings, East Cheam, the most celebrated claustrophobic address of a generation. I'm sorry to say it came as no real surprise when this talented actor, who had found international success playing the thwarted dreamer, decided to end his own life in a dreary Australian hotel room. It seemed that, wherever he went in the world, his hopes remained enmeshed in those dreary, life-destroying net curtains.

*While Mainwaring remains a buffoon, he has a touch of hero about him. And in my book that makes him, not a comic, but a tragic figure.*

And then, of course, there was *Steptoe*. 'Young' Harold was another whose ambitions soared into worlds of glamour, sophistication and beauty, even as his life remained hemmed in by the heaps of rusty metal, old rags and decaying masonry of an East London scrapyard. Like Captain Mainwaring, the young Steptoe railed and rebelled and battled against the spirit-crushing circumstances that beset him. And, like Captain Mainwaring, he knew – in the private recesses of the heart – that he could never change them. It is the perennial tragedy of the comic: the slapstick laugh on the face of the broken-hearted clown.

One of my favourite shows of more recent times was the hit comedy *Cheers*, which chronicled the lives of a group of no-hopers hanging out in a particular Boston bar. Shaking the cocktails was barman Sam, good looking, arrogant and with a limitless stock of one-liners. This was the man who measured his self-esteem by his pulling power. His tragedy was that it was fast running down. He was getting old. Then there was Diane, the blonde barmaid with the dreams of academe, her acid wit and withering phrases honed to hide her vulnerability. While her words held the great put-down, her eyes were filled with longing. All she really wanted was love: genuine, open, undemanding love. But those barbed remarks were proof that all she ever found were users. And there were the regulars, Big Norm and Cliff, retreating from a world that had rendered them invisible. In this little bar they were somebodies, their opinions mattered, people listened. Their tragedy was that they could not spend their entire lives sitting on their favourite bar stools.

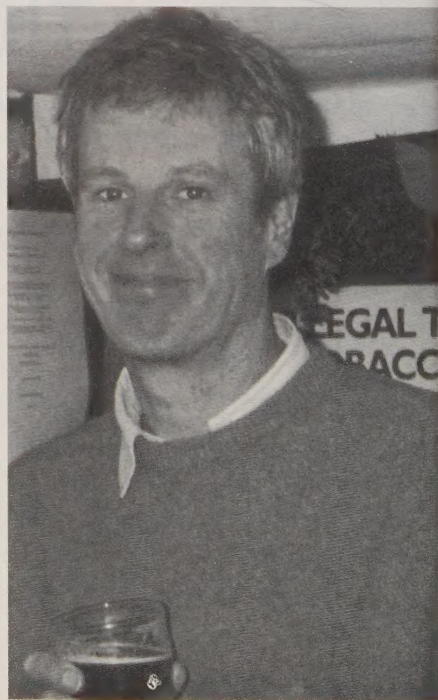
Which brings us back to the question: why do we watch them? Why do we choose to laugh at people who at the very core of their being are lost and filled with longings that will never be realised? Surely it is the flaw in us? Are we not using the misfortunes of others to make

ourselves feel better? Well perhaps. And then again perhaps not.

One of the hard lessons of growing up is that we have to bear the pain of disappointment. The dreams we started out with are hardly likely to be fulfilled. That's the first let down. And then we expect everyone we meet is going to love us. That's the second. In short, we expect our lives to be filled with love, beauty and laughter, but they aren't. Sooner or later we learn to accept the world as a fairly tawdry place. Growing up for most of us is about compromise, settling for less than the ideal, making the best of a pretty mediocre job. But, unlike us, our comic heroes refuse to compromise, at least mine do.

They hold onto their hopes against the odds, shrugging off the blows and brickbats of the grown-up world and clinging obdurately to the dreams of youth. They rage and rail and fulminate against the smothering mediocrity of modern life. And that's why they fascinate and enthrall us. We laugh at them, not because we want to see them brought down but because we want them to go on being as they always are – stubborn, impossible and ridiculously idealistic. Because we know, deep down, that the unrelenting, hopeless, heart-aching longing that makes them such social misfits is really a longing for God. They can never be at home in the world because, whether or not they realise it themselves, their home is somewhere else.

So the last thing we want is for them to give up their idiosyncrasies and live normal, sensible half-lives like the rest of us. We would far rather they went on chasing their naïve and impossible dreams. Because we recognise somewhere that in the drab, dull, cloyingly-comfortable lives we all lead they are the repository of whatever remnants of hope we ourselves have left. ■



A former farming journalist, **Graham Harvey** is now agricultural story editor of *The Archers*. His book, *The Killing of the Countryside*, won the 1997 BP Natural World Book Award.





# Clowning and outreach

by Sandra Pollerman

The doors of the church stood open, the banners and posters announced the delights of the Autumn Fair being held within. The aroma from the barbecue drifted into the neighbourhood and the tunes from the barrel organ drew curious passers-by. For those who knew the event, the welcome was certain. For those who did not, the clown made a difference.

Big-booted, baggy-trouserred, red-nosed: the clown stood by the gateway, waving and speaking to people who passed on the street. 'Hi there. Welcome. Come inside!' The toy dog under his arm was offered for stroking, the balloons in his pocket became poodles and mice, the smile on his face seemed to stay there for hours. 'What's going on in there?', they asked. 'Come and see,' he said. Some shook their heads and walked on by. Others answered the smile with a nod, and entered.

The clown reaches out to bring people in. In this traditional rôle of welcomer the clown exercises the freedom to step back and forth across the borders. The clown creates a safe passage for those outside to enter in. While the circus clown may step across the border of the centre ring and enter the stands to tease and tickle, the outreach of the Christian clown has a different focus. The clown carries the message of Christ the Clown who stands at the centre of our faith tradition and calls us all to 'Come and play in the Kingdom'.

Life-giving, love-making, laughter-bringing: the topsy-turvy clown calls out to come and see. Jesus says 'Follow me!' and then leads his followers along the road. With the gift of this love in our midst, we have the model and are offered the courage to risk a tumble for truth and justice. Jesus brings us the promise, we share it with the world: God is with us, bringing healing and wholeness into our midst. The circus clown also works in the

centre ring, sometimes alone, sometimes in teams. From a great distance the attention of the audience becomes focussed on a very small detail; what seems to be an accident can draw gasps from the crowd and then erupt into releasing laughter as everything comes right in the end. Christian clowns, too, bring the Word of God alive as they work and play to recall the stories at the heart of our faith. Using these traditional arts with discipline, fidelity to the story received, and great good humour the Way of Jesus and the history of the People of God can reach those who seem to be far away indeed.

It's good in theory but does it work in practice? Folks who have been doing it say it does . . . so do those who play with them. The language of laughter and tears is universal; connecting with people happens when we use it.

For nearly twenty years, people in the UK have been exploring the use of the arts of the Christian clown through an organisation

called the Holy Fools, UK. Begun by a small group of professional clowns, storytellers, dancers, mimes and clergy from different denominations, the work has continued. Individual clowns and local clown ministry teams can be seen doing hospice work, visiting hospitals and prisons, as well as making contributions to parish worship in a variety of ways. The Revd Roly Bains, one of the co-founders, now serves as a clown in his full-time ministry. Another early member works for the Red Cross in Europe and has taken her clown to Sarajevo and Kosovo. From the very beginning, Franciscan brothers and sisters have supported this work and explored the use of the arts themselves.

'Follow me' is the invitation from Jesus in our midst who invites us all to come and play in the Kingdom. ■



*Sandra Pollerman is a storyteller working with spirituality, personal growth and community development.*

*For information about the Holy Fools UK, contact the National Co-ordinator: Richard James 020 8554 7986; email: age.concern.waltham.forest 1@ virgin.net*

## Streetlife

### POVERTY

Poverty is an Old Man. Bird-Headed  
Pigeon-beaked.  
He trawls the gutter. Flocks for food.  
Scatters and gathers. Tattered.  
Pick Peck he goes, Pick Peck.  
Poverty is an old man.  
His grip is a talon. It rips you.  
Pick Peck.

### YOUTH

Youth is a fast car.  
Full of Noise.  
Thundering. Thud a Boom.  
Thud a Boom, Boom . . .  
Trailing Away.

*James Ashdown*





# One minus one is nun!

by Sister Rowan Clare CSF

What is the place of humour in the Religious Life? When asked, the sisters at Compton Durville, where I live, consistently replied: 'essential survival mechanism', or words to that effect. But why? After all, Brother Ramon's book *Franciscan Spirituality* points out that Francis 'would not allow shallow levity or empty laughter and gossip, for these are not evidences of spiritual joy, but of a superficial lifestyle and deterioration in community life.' And devotees of *The Name of the Rose* will recall that one old monk murdered several people rather than let them read a book on comedy and laughter which he considered contrary to God's will.

Yet *The Principles of the First Order* state clearly that '[the brothers and sisters] will delight in laughter and good fellowship'. And humour in community has much more to offer than shallow levity. Replies to our advert in recent issues of *franciscan* for people to work alongside us at Compton suggest that shared laughter is one of the greatest attractions we offer. For humour is a powerful badge of belonging; to laugh with those who laugh, as well as weeping with those who weep, evokes our common humanity and mutual commitment. Why else should 'a good sense of humour' have become such an essential selling point in lonely hearts columns that it has its own common acronym, GSOH? Humour allows us to communicate; we can express important truths about ourselves and enjoy it. When someone makes us laugh, they become more attractive and more human to us. An invitation to laugh with someone (rather than at them) is an invitation to respond directly to their personal view of the world; communion is established.

Humour is also intimately connected with vulnerability. Stand-up comedians talk of 'dying' if they cannot evoke that communion with their audience; and their use of that word is poignant, for it is not just their act, but their personhood, which is rejected if people fail to laugh with them. So too in community: we seek to live together as brothers and sisters

with people of entirely different backgrounds and histories, and it is costly to open ourselves to others when each overture invites that same rejection. Humour in community can operate as a subtle way of protecting ourselves from the other's power to reject us; we easily become self-deprecating, pretending with apparent lightness that what we are saying doesn't really matter. Of course, self-protecting humour risks becoming so habitual that when we really do want to be taken seriously, nobody notices!

Communities, too, have more than their share of the 'sad clowns' whose constant humour disguises an inner darkness. The relationship between humour and pain is explored in more depth elsewhere in this issue. Yet perhaps those of us who live as the clowns of God, or fools for Christ, experience that link with particular intensity. Francis himself often found moments of exuberant celebration spilling over into tears. And our own life together, when it is done well, draws us to explore knowledge and acceptance of self and others at an unusually deep level. The emotional and spiritual demands of any community, at times, are such that only humour can make it bearable. Humour is cathartic; it permits the release of very deep, often painful emotions, and it enables us to live creatively with the consequences of prolonged self-exposure. Of course, humour

can be used too as an effective mask for our true feelings – but it can offer sly peeks under the mask, while taking the edge off the intensity of giving so much away.

I think humour only remains funny – and appropriate in a Christian community – so long as it remains essentially celebratory. Each other's funny little ways are a target for humour only so long as our laughter doesn't turn vicious. Just as shared humour can be a badge of belonging, so too it can be a mark of exclusion which is death to true community. Community humour must affirm, rather than belittle; rejoice in our differences, rather than taunt or bully.

*So does God  
have a sense of humour?  
I think he must have;  
few of us can reflect  
on our journey into and  
through community  
without seeing divine  
banana-skins left for us  
to slip on.*

Yet the line between laughing at and laughing with is a fine one. It is Sister So-and-So's little foibles which make her uniquely human and lovable, but they are all too easy to use as weapons against her when the reality of living alongside her begins to bite. The God who allows us to fail, again and again if necessary, makes it possible to believe that we can be liked and loved despite our mistakes; mistakes in chapel, particularly, provide a rich source of humour (often because they offer irresistible new theological insights, of the 'Thou shalt commit adultery' kind!) And one of the most valuable community living skills is an ability to laugh at ourselves; but the laughter of others cannot by itself force us to grow before we are ready.

In this way, the sensitive use of humour is a precious tool in learning the essential Franciscan trait of humility. Humour can take the sharp edge off criticism or reproof, and provide gentle ways into resolving conflict. Above all, perhaps, its value to community life is in bursting bubbles of pomposity and spiritual conceit. As Harry Williams puts it, in his courageous autobiography *Some Day I'll Find You*, 'The community [in his case the Community of the Resurrection at Mirfield] is the last place where a person can get away with any spiritual pretensions. He is seen through at once and becomes a figure of fun. That abrasive atmosphere is one of our chief health-giving properties.' And it was another brother of the same community who once remarked that the police would have a terrible time trying to solve a murder in any Religious house: 'because absolutely everybody would have a motive!'

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Like any close-knit group, Religious communities have in-jokes. And like any other close-knit group, you have to 'speak the language' to find them funny, or even comprehensible; often they are quite sophisticated comments on the charism or practices of a given community. During an ecumenical workshop on poverty, a Jesuit novice told me the following story:

Three priests from Religious communities are discussing what they do with the collection after services. The Franciscan says: 'I draw a small circle on the ground, stand inside it, and throw the money in the air; what falls inside the circle is mine, and the rest is God's'. The Dominican says: 'I too stand inside the circle, but what falls inside is for God, and the rest is mine'. And the Jesuit says: 'Well, I also draw a small circle, stand inside it, and throw the money in the air – and what God wants, he takes'.

Such jokes are usually based in affectionate teasing; the best satire comes out of a deep understanding and respect for the way things work. However, at least since Chaucer's time, Religious Life has also been the subject of humour from outside. Sometimes affectionate, sometimes aggressive, sometimes merely obscene, many nun or monk jokes are based on preconceptions about our lifestyle which may bear little resemblance to reality.

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As Harry Williams puts it: '[People] imagine that life in a monastery is one long cartoon, an un-ending series from morning to night of cracks in the cloister'. He adds: 'Monks as jokes are a pleasant projection, and not all that wide of the mark'; after all, it's easy to see a ridiculous side to a lifestyle so far from the modern norm without any special malicious intent. However, some jokes have a murkier subtext of profound unease with or hostility to our life. This is particularly true of the 'sexy nun' genre of jokes, which seem to spring from a distaste for women's sexuality in

general, and particularly for women who choose celibacy. From my recent involvement with secondary schools, it's clear that nothing much has changed since I first heard them at about the age of nine. But not all such jokes are hostile: while some definitely do have a quality of gloating over perceived hypocrisies (like just about all Chaucer's portrayals of religious figures), others seem to have more to do with an awareness that communities are made up of real human beings who aren't immune from life's mess and muddle. When I first appeared in their school playground, two very awkward 14-year-olds greeted me with the taunt: 'What's one minus one? NUN!' Several weeks later, they still use the same joke whenever they see me, but it's no longer an insult; it has become a shared password, not to keep me out but to let them in, to make contact with me when they could never ask for it directly.

I must admit that I enjoy subverting people's preconceptions about Religious Life. One sister I know was once accosted by drunken football fans, asking (rather more succinctly) if she would sleep with them for money. When she told me this, I said: 'You should have said No thanks, I've taken a vow of poverty!' And if we show that we are not shocked or upset by the projections revealed by many nun and monk jokes, humour in community has great witness value.

The people who visit our houses, or who encounter us in churches and schools, trains and pubs, need to know that we are human after all; the discovery often delights them and shortens the route to understanding. And at the heart of our reality, as Franciscans, is the joy 'which all may feel, if they may not know its source'. Humour and joy, of course, are not synonymous, yet both help us express a Franciscan delight in the world as it is made, complete with imperfections.

Laughter rooted in realism, a delight that things are as they are, burgeons into praise of the One who made them so. It is tempting to laugh at Francis, capering around playing his stick 'violin'; his very lack of restraint and self-consciousness make for ridicule, because they are embarrassing in a grown man.



## Theme Prayer

O Lord,  
like the clown, we stand in the middle of our dying and rising,  
dancing between the tension of both, looking like a failure,  
but in that very act, being at our best.

Enable us to overcome our pride  
and to stand before you exposed and honest and vulnerable.

And in so doing, may we become more like you,  
Jesus our Redeemer. Amen.

Yet if we learn to laugh with him, sharing his unashamed joy in his Lord, we share some of the attractiveness that drew people to him. I believe it is that Franciscan honesty, tempered with self-accepting humour, which makes it possible not to fear ourselves and our deepest emotions – and then to reach out to others.

So does God have a sense of humour? I think he must have; few of us can reflect on our journey into and through community without seeing divine banana-skins left for us to slip on. When I first read Mark's gospel as a rebellious teenager, it seemed to me that Jesus positively enjoyed outwitting all those people who tried to trip him with their questions and missed the point every time.

Perhaps that's largely my projection. But more seriously, as I get to know 'the son of Man who came eating and drinking, who loved the birds and the flowers, who blessed little children' (that last not being my own strongest point!) I see more fully the extent of Christian joy, and a warm affirming humour that delights in all creation.

On the wall near my bed is a modern Beatitude: 'Blessèd are they who can laugh at themselves: for they will never cease to be amused.' ■



Sister **Rowan Clare** is a member of the Community of St Francis





# Of the mouths of babes and comedians . . .

by Brother Desmond Alban SSF

Young Katherine, aged four, was beginning to take an interest in what went on in the anglo-catholic church she enjoyed attending with her father and baby brother. On this occasion she was in church to see the gospel solemnly proclaimed but, from her perspective, the incense smoke rising from the thurible as it passed over the gospel book looked for all the world like steam. Hence her question, 'Why is that man ironing that book?' But she clearly listened to the gospel reading itself too, for her next enquiry, after hearing that Jesus would build his church on the rock (Peter) was, 'Is our church built on a rock?'

Katherine, of course, was not trying to be funny. We might find humour in recounting the incident but for her they were serious enquiries, from the unique perspective of the young which is honoured in scripture. The comments and sayings of the young, on all sorts of issues, provide material for best-selling books because they help us see the puzzling realities, and sometimes absurdities, of our grown-ups' world with fresh eyes. As such, I believe children have a lot in common with newspaper cartoonists, scriptwriters and satirical comedians. They too help us, if we will only allow them to, to find a fresh perspective, a way of seeing ourselves, in the church specifically, as others see us.

*To look at a typical congregation of the Church of England, or indeed a typical local house-gathering in the Society or Community of Saint Francis, is to be tempted to say, 'Well, one can either laugh or cry . . .'  
Perhaps there is a third alternative though. Perhaps the primary response ought to be to love.*

My impression is that BBC TV's *The Vicar of Dibley* is popular viewing amongst many sisters and brothers in our community, as it doubtless is in a number of vicarages up and down the country. Not all however! I remember a conversation with one brother not keen on watching this comedy who happened

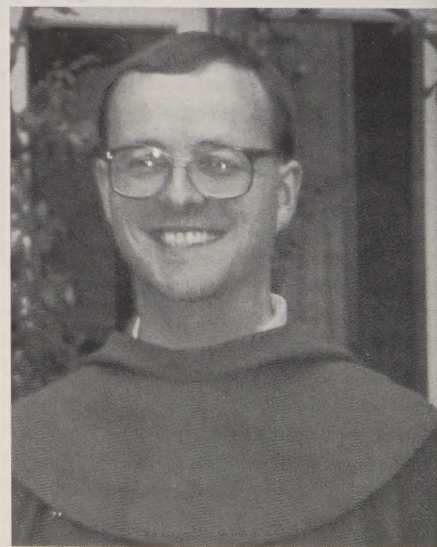
to be of the integrity opposed to the ordination of women. 'It's a *comedy*,' I said to him in frustration, 'you're meant to *laugh* at it.' I had however misunderstood the grounds of his objection. The brother was not concerned about the title rôle of a woman priest. Rather, what he had found was that in its portrayal of the life of an anglican church the programme was so close to the mark, so near the knuckle, that he really couldn't stand the experience! But there are those who might object for other reasons.

It would be tempting to fill an article like this with jokes. Tempting, but dangerous. One reason is that for every reader who laughed at a particular joke there would be others who would be offended. I would be walking on egg-shells. I will however confess to finding *certain* religious jokes really rather funny, particular those that are about the foibles of Christians themselves and their attitudes. I even have one or two I like to tell against myself. By joking though, and allowing others to joke about us, are we implying that the things we believe and do are of no importance? Not at all. We have only to look at other popular subjects for humour. Politics is one – and, if we'll admit it, right government is hardly a trivial matter. Sex, of course, is probably the most popular subject for jokes, though again it is a minefield and there will be those Christians who would perhaps object to even the mildest of jokes here. Reactions would be similar to the whole area of dark humour – gallows humour, medical-school humour and the use of even human tragedies and disasters as a subject. I am sure we would all agree there are jokes which go too far, offending common decency and Christian values. The problem is where to draw the line, and again I hope it won't cause shock for me to admit that there are jokes that I would tell in certain company and refrain from elsewhere. The problem is, it seems to me, that the funniest humour, whether from a stand-up comic, a sit-com, or a joke told to friends, is very often that which comes closest to the line, wherever it is we draw it. Just consider the opposite: Jokes in Christmas

crackers and in books for children are, appropriately, very 'safe.' They are also, I would contend, not usually very funny – though perhaps we enjoy in a way the groan rather than belly laugh with which we greet them. I am not saying that to joke you

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inevitably have to risk offence. There is some very funny, gentle and innocent humour. My point rather is that we actually laugh at what is powerful and important in human life. Humour about religion is a kind of homage to its ongoing relevance and importance, at least to some in our society. Indeed, considering how people laugh at the church reminds me of laughter in church. There can't be many brothers and sisters who have never experienced one of those situations of almost irrepressible hilarity in chapel. A line of a psalm ('You have exchanged your people for

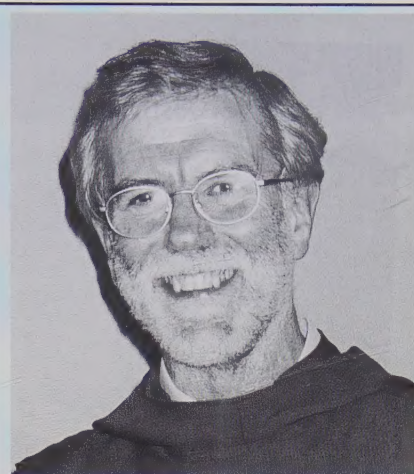


Brother Desmond Alban lives in Birmingham where he works principally with the young, and he also visits and works with Christians in evangelism elsewhere in the country.



# Minister's Letter

Brother Damian SSF,  
Minister Provincial of the First Order Brothers  
of the European Province, writes:



Leaning on a sturdy, mahogany table in the backwaters of the Warden's House at Saint Cyprian's College, Rondo (Masasi diocese in Tanzania), with windows wide open to catch any hint of breeze, I strain for connections between East Africa and Central London. The subtle harmonies of this morning's hymns mingle in my head with the rhythms of the George Formby classic 'I'm leaning on a lamp-post at the corner of the street in case a certain little lady comes by'. Meanwhile, a muscovy duck waddles past my window, but I dismiss her. Disappointed, she looks at me and, as if reminding me of yesterday's egg, pronounces 'It is more blessed to give than to receive'. Her accusation pricks my European conscience and releases a muddled mix of pride and guilt about us and them, about white and black, about Britain and Africa, about the ambiguous lady, Poverty.

Yes, I am deeply grateful we have sent brothers and sisters of quality and talent to Tanzania and Zimbabwe and Zambia over the last several years. Our contribution to the African Church as Franciscans has humble echoings of the love of our little lady, Poverty. Roger Alexander, who, when you read this, will be just back in the UK from a six-year stint as a pastor in the Manicaland Diocese of Zimbabwe; James Anthony, with whom I am staying (in February and early March) is Warden to five theological students and acting head to eleven secondary school pupils. His gently-measured management skills, his keeping the money straight and the show-on-the-road are acceptable Franciscan employments.

Yet the odds are stacked high against them. The Church is chronically poor and underfunded. Educational material is scarce. The location is remote beyond words. And in this rainy season there is no rain: the careful tending of the shamba (farm) produce of maize, beans, and pumpkin is useless when 'there is no water'. The main water-tank here serves about a hundred people; it is at rock

bottom. A little rain from the gutters supplements the water stocks but these too are probably all gone. Yesterday, a decision was made to buy in from the reserves from the river 1000 feet below Rondo at a price of forty litres of diesel for two weeks' supply. Temporary relief, certainly, but things are always tight, basic supplies are continually running out. There is an obvious tension around and relationships suffer.

As I walked to chapel, suddenly from behind came the thud of something live falling from a tree. Momentarily frightened, I saw a large, thick, speckled lizard staring at me, with a face set like a bull-dog ready to attack my ankles. I soon realised that the poor creature was winded, not having intended to fall out of the tree at all! In his dilemma, he looked angry.

There is cause, too, for the voices from the continent of Africa to sound angry. The evidence would suggest that they take it out on themselves. The efforts that go into growing food, into education, into maintaining Church structures, are enormous. From the European end, it looks as if we have done our bit. Times have changed. Independence has come. We can even be right in pointing out that corruption in high places makes Aid programmes suspect and ineffective. We need to resist the temptation to give yet more. It doesn't help, we are advised. But with all due respect...

It is in the northern hemisphere where increasing volumes of the world's resources are taken. It is ourselves, in blatant disregard of the warnings, who are destroying the ozone layer, which affects the weather extremes. It is our booming stock markets, rising to record peaks, that have the effect of the world's poor becoming poorer. The merging of large companies in the name of efficiency and profit margins exclude far more than they create.

When we hear the words of Jesus, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive', let us first

acknowledge that it is nearly always we who are receiving while millions are given no choice in the matter. And we can afford to embrace the lady, Poverty.

One evening on my Africa tour, I spoke with an Anglican group in a teacher training college in Kampala. The chaplain said apologetically, 'I'm afraid our students expect to receive more than they give.' At first, I was saddened to hear this. Later, I had to withdraw to my room, and I cried. The following day I resolved in the way of Francis' deep love of the lady Poverty, I must press with all my influence and energy – and hopefully in the company of all my brothers and sisters – to work for the fairer distribution of wealth in our world. SSF should be blazing the trail as 'lesser' brothers and sisters, that others may have a little more, not less, as time goes by. With the encouragement received from the election to life profession of two brothers, and of three to first profession, and the admission of five new novices at Glasshampton, we are in a strong position to be a sign in the world that it is indeed more blessed to give than to receive.

*Damian SSF*

a trifle'...), or a liturgical mistake, can seem hilarious in chapel in a way that evaporates afterwards. Do we not care about the offering of prayer? I hope we do. But it is perhaps because we care, because we give to our chapel life a solemnity and dignity that honours what we do there, that our awareness of what is funny is heightened.

Returning to *Dibley*, as an example of how comedians see the church, it strikes me that in many ways the Vicar is not the most significant character. Yes, she is funny, and she does highlight certain perceptions of the clergy. It is the villagers though, the diverse members of the parish council in particular, who strike me most. Are they really the sorts of people that make up the church? Well, I'm afraid, they are – or rather we are.

To look at a typical congregation of the Church of England, or indeed a typical local house-gathering in the Society or Community of Saint

Francis, is to be tempted to say, 'Well, one can either laugh or cry...' Perhaps there is a third alternative though. Perhaps the primary response ought to be to love. Let us use humour, especially the humour of others, as a mirror to ourselves, and to ask questions of what we're really doing in the church and what we're really like. But let us be kind in our humour with each other. And let us especially never give up loving, and believing in, the absurd, mixed-up, largely as yet unredeemed *Us* who form the church – the church Christ loved and for whom he gave himself up. ■

*Humour about religion  
is a kind of homage  
to its ongoing relevance  
and importance.*



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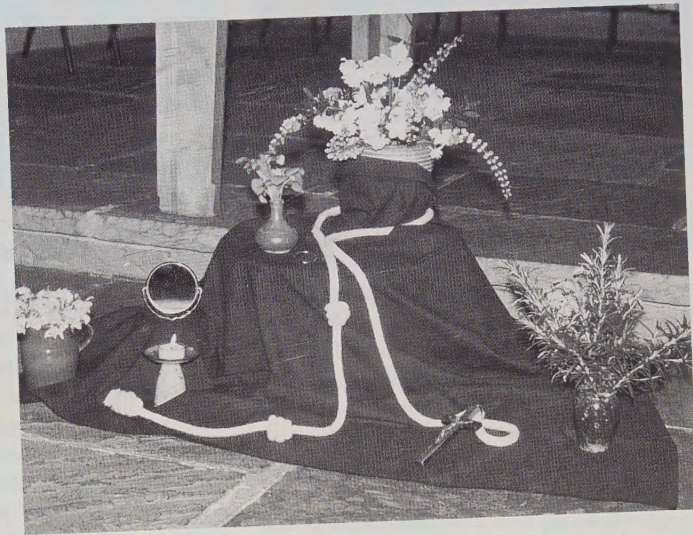
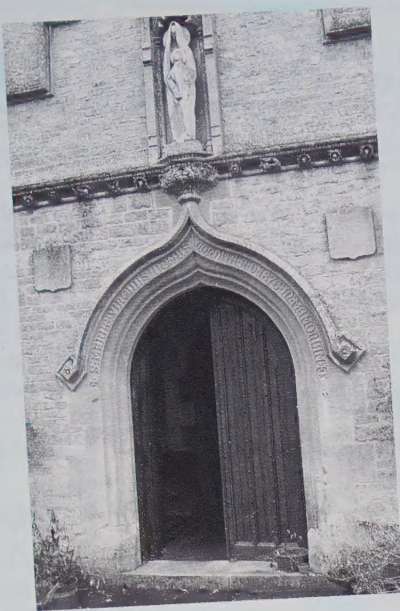
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# Community Routes



*Brother Philip Bartholomew, newly-elected Guardian of Hilfield Friary*

## ◆◆ African Safari

*Brother John Francis writes:*

Boundless skies and lush vegetation, veldt stretching farther than the eye can see, cyclones, political crises, huge wealth and vast areas of intense poverty. Southern Africa has it all, and more. For three months I visited Third Order groups in South Africa and Zimbabwe and spent time with the Community of the Divine Compassion at Penhalonga, following a pattern of visits made by Brother Damian SSF last year.

Apart from my time with Third Order groups I preached in a number of places, and visited a wide range of social projects talking with many people working in the field of human and community development. I explored current political and social issues learning about the effects of AIDS on up to 40% of the population and the problem of violence and high unemployment in townships. The legacy of centuries of inhumanity in South Africa will take years to resolve. Zimbabwe was suffering from a fuel crisis and the government was under pressure to resign. Often it felt as if parallel universes were



*Oswin Paul, Martin Philip and Christopher were professed at Hilfield on Lady Day, 2000*

operating – one white, the other black – and whilst segregation is over, these worlds rarely seemed to connect.

Do remember the needs of this region in your prayers.

## ◆◆ Korean Advent

Between December and February Brothers **Christopher John** SSF and **Stephen and Lawrence** of the Korean Franciscan Brotherhood were touring the UK, visiting a variety of friaries and other Anglican Religious communities. To enable the Korean brothers to see at first hand the variety of expressions of Religious Life, they visited SSF friaries ranging from Hilfield to Glasgow, Benedictine houses (Elmore and Burford) as well as the Community of the Resurrection and the Community of the Servants of the Will of God. They could easily have been overwhelmed by the experience (4000 miles, twelve different communities) but they found the common features such as prayer and hospitality a source of continuity. Stephen's impressions are of great appreciation of the simple life and the warm hospitality in all the communities we visited. Lawrence noticed the great variety in forms of Religious Life in such things as prayer style and dining arrangements. He commented on church members at worship as participating with quietness and politeness. And as for English winter weather? "Compared with Korea it's not cold but very rainy, windy and cloudy." Christopher John found being a guest a real sabbatical experience and jokingly is offering to prepare a comparative guide to Religious guest houses of the UK.

## ◆◆ Primary Task

*Sister Nan writes:*

"Miss, Miss, Mii...iiii...ss", is the sound above all other sounds of my job. I work part-time in a Primary School in Balham. It is a bus ride and a fifteen minutes walk away from our house in Brixton. I do three jobs really: I'm a Primary Helper in the morning in Reception; at 11.30 I go and have lunch with the others and turn into a "dinner lady"; after the lunch break, which I help to supervise, I go to the Junior Department and give extra help to two children in their classes. It is great to be back working with children and I really enjoy the variety. At the beginning of the current year we had sixteen different home languages in the school, so there are a large variety of cultures present, too. The school isn't a Church School and that makes quite a difference, as I haven't been out of 'church culture' very often since I joined the community. I love it! I also thoroughly enjoy the different groups of which I am a part. The

whole ethos of the school is inclusive and welcoming to parents, children, staff and helpers alike. They seem to enjoy their token 'nun'. I am so lucky to have found a job which is so worthwhile, fulfilling for me, and also helping to generate some income for the community.

## ◆◆ Encouraging Local Evangelism

Brother **Desmond Alban** has been part of a small team, led by Stephen Cottrell and James Lawrence of *Springboard*, training members of churches in the Chelmsford diocese in evangelism. The focus of the training was preparation for local Mission Weekends, during the first weekend in April, run by each of the twenty or thirty churches involved. Members of the team led various practical workshops at two training days, held in a secondary school in the diocese in October and February. During the April weekend itself they visited some of the churches on request, to speak or to help in other ways, though the events were mostly run by the local Christians themselves.

## ◆◆ Poor Clares of Reparation

Sister **Mary Dorothea** (Eleanor Marguerite Annis) died on 29 January 2000. She was aged eighty-three years and in the twenty-eighth year of her Religious profession. Mary Dorothea was the last surviving sister of the Order of Poor Clares of Reparation. As she is remembered for her gentleness and firm faith, the Society of Saint Francis gives thanks for all that the *P.C.Rep.* sisters gave, by their lives and quiet witness, to the Episcopal Church in the United States of America and to our American Province.

## ◆◆ Round Up

On 25 March, **Christopher, Martin Philip** and **Oswin Paul** made their professions in first vows at Hilfield Friary.

**Seraphim** made his profession in life vows on 28 March at St Alban's Church, Holborn.

**Jason** expects to make his profession in life vows at Hilfield Friary on 12 May.

In February, **Elizabeth** moved to Newcastle-under-Lyme, **Maureen** to Birmingham, and **Jennie** to Compton Durville.

**Austin** and **Nicholas Alan** have moved from Glasshampton to a former vicarage in the Sheffield Diocese to continue the House for Contemplative Living project.

**Matthew** has been granted *Leave of Absence* with effect from 1 March. ■



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in humility, love and joy.

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\*

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Sister Mary Dorothea PCRep, RIP

## Hilfield Friary Events

18-21 May: 'Secret Garden' open

Saturday 17 June: Companions Day

Saturday 8 July: Summer Festival

Saturday 22 July: Third Order Day

Saturday 9 September: Companions Day

Saturday 16 September: Stigmata Festival

Saturday 2 December: Pre-Advent Quiet Day

for details, contact: The Friary, Hilfield Dorchester, Dorset DT2 7BE  
(01300) 341345; or email: [ssf@hilfielduk.freemove.co.uk](mailto:ssf@hilfielduk.freemove.co.uk)

## The brothers at Glasshampton

are again looking for men and women  
who would like to join them over the summer as  
**working guests.**

From July to the end of September,  
the brothers would welcome any who can come for  
**up to a fortnight**

to share in the life of the Monastery  
whilst at the same time giving a hand  
with the running of the house and garden.

Contact: The Guardian,  
St Mary-at-the-Cross, Glasshampton, SHRAWLEY, Worcester WR6 6TQ

## Open Day at Compton Durville Sing of the Lord's Goodness!

Saturday 10 June 2000

12 noon Welcome and opening worship;

Please bring a packed lunch

1.30 pm Creative workshops;

3.15 pm Afternoon tea

4.00 pm Eucharist;

5.00 pm Farewells

\* \* \*

For more information, please contact

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# The humour of Jesus

by Sister Rosemary CHN

**'Ordinary people used to enjoy listening to him.' (Matt 12.37) After yet another turgid exposition of the teaching of Jesus, one begins to wonder why.**

**A commonplace of preaching tells us, "We read in the Gospel that Jesus wept, but we do not read that he laughed." However, could such a dour figure as that win the rapt attention of the crowds, and the enduring loyalty of his disciples?**

Jesus was by every evidence a master storyteller. Telling tales to a passing crowd in the open air requires a riveting technique: entertain, or the audience disappears. But we may fail to recognise the humour in these stories because it is so unlike classic English wit: this is not the humour of the delicate understatement, but of ludicrous exaggeration.

When we picture the person with the plank in his eye offering to remove the speck from someone else's (Matt 7.3), the disproportion is expressed in a particularly visual way. This is a cartoon in words.

The teachers of the law (Matt 23.24) strain out a gnat and swallow a camel. Most commentators seem able to grasp that this is a joke, but they make much heavier weather of the camel going through the eye of a needle (Matt 19.24). They are much happier to explain that the eye of the needle in question is actually a gate in the wall of Jerusalem. (Could this be because they have an interest in seeing the rich person's entrance into the kingdom of heaven as just tricky and difficult, rather than totally impossible?)

So we do not need to worry about how the unforgiving servant (Matt 18.24) came to owe a sum of a size more appropriate to a national debt. Nor need we speculate what kind of

genetic modification produced the grain of wheat that brought forth a hundredfold (Matt 13.8); this isn't a treatise on agriculture.

To this world of unrestrained over-statement belong the enormous quantities of wine produced at the wedding at Cana (John 2;6), which so embarrassed my teetotal grandfather, and the twelve baskets full of scraps left over from the feeding of the five thousand (Mark 6.43). These are not stories about efficient catering, but about the exuberant prodigality of creation, as celebrated in Psalm 104, in God's answer to Job and Ecclesiasticus 42-43.

The successes of the importunate widow (Luke 18.5) and the friend knocking at the door at midnight (Luke 11.8) are not – in spite of commentators' furrowed brows – solemn allegories teaching us that God is like an unjust judge or a harassed neighbour. They are graphic illustrations, which the hearers will remember, of what it is like truly to desire something, and to entreat with all one's strength to receive it: a miniature manual of prayer.

A large category of the humour of Jesus is the deflation of pomposity. This observant onlooker has watched children at play and learned the language of their games (Matt 11.16): his response to them is sympathetic, but he could not have endeared himself to the adults whose attitudes he compared to theirs.

Sometimes we see simply the picture of the self-important person shown up as ridiculous: who can forget the self-congratulation of the Pharisee in the temple (Luke 18.11) or the pen-picture of the self-advertising hypocrites (Matt 6.5)? Sometimes the ridicule has a sharper edge, as in Luke 12.39-40, when the teachers of the law not only show off their own piety but also devour widows' houses. This is not just a laughing matter.

There is a certain mordant humour too in the way that the rich man (Luke 16.24), even in the midst of the torments of the damned, assumes that the poor beggar will still be available to run errands for him: "Send Lazarus to cool my tongue...to take a message to my brothers..." Some people never learn.

In the story of the guest at the banquet who gets above himself and is forced to take the lowest place (Luke 14.9), we have a verbal banana-skin joke, except that it is not so cruel

since the injury is simply to the person's pride, and he will be better off without it.

One category of traditional rough folk-humour which is strikingly absent from the recorded words of Jesus is the mockery of the disabled or the disadvantaged. Perhaps this is why the laughter of Jesus is not mentioned, since the laughter which does appear in the Gospels is of this cruel kind: the mourners in the house of Jairus laugh him to scorn (Luke 8.53), and most painful of all is the jeering to which he is subjected while on the cross.

*When Jesus encounters people who are already weighed down by circumstances, his response is to champion and encourage them. His targets are the proud and the powerful; lessons which come again and again, are, 'The last shall be first and the first last,' and 'Those who exalt themselves will be humbled, while those who humble themselves will be exalted.' People's pomposity is undermined, not their dignity and self-respect.*

In contrast, when Jesus encounters people who are already weighed down by circumstances, his response is to champion and encourage them. His targets are the proud and the powerful; lessons which come again and again, are, 'The last shall be first and the first last,' and 'Those who exalt themselves will be humbled, while those who humble themselves will be exalted.' People's pomposity is undermined, not their dignity and self-respect.

There seems to be an exception to this in the meeting with the Syro-Phoenician woman (Mark 7.26). She comes to him in great distress, and he reacts to her plea with (it appears) a crude racial/religious sneer. "It is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs." However, she feels herself not crushed but challenged, and sends back a spirited answer to which he responds with a joyous "Touché!" Had she read him correctly? Did he mean it from the first to be a battle of wits?

When Jesus speaks to the crowds, his humour is broad and exaggerated, like the gestures of an actor in a large theatre. His interaction with those closest to him is different. So much can be left unsaid, and so



*Sister Rosemary is a member of the Community of the Holy Name in Derby; she is a non-stipendiary curate and her other interests include adult education, spirituality and feminist theology.*



much of the interpretation depends on our estimate of his tone of voice.

The banter of close friendship peeps through his renaming of the fiery Zebedee boys 'Sons of Thunder'. Out of the same relationship comes the inspiration to name the impulsive, foot-in-mouth, accident-prone Simon 'Rock'. Not that these names are simply a matter of fun; they are one-word sermons delivered with a light touch, reminding the bearers of their besetting faults, serving in the one case to restrain, in the other to steady, correcting them without destroying their self-respect and spontaneity.

Friends can be robustly rude to each other without being emotionally destructive. It sheds a different, and more plausible, light on the relationship between Jesus and the disciples if the exclamation in Mark 9.19 – 'How long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you?' – is read as affectionate exasperation rather than soul-searing condemnation.

The same relationship lies behind the hugely misunderstood scene with the sisters at Bethany (*Luke 10.38*). How much competition and mutual resentment between the successors of Martha and Mary – whether self-identified or categorised by others – has found its focus here. The key to the interpretation of this passage lies in the fact that Jesus had, and retained, a warm friendship with both sisters. Valuing one of them at the expense of the other is not the point. Opening up a wider field of possibilities is.

It is easy to see why the humour of Jesus is often missed – not only because it is alien in character, but because we inevitably read the Gospels with hindsight (as indeed they were written), and the shadows of the Passion fall only too clearly across the page. But still, we should not let the Man of Sorrows entirely eclipse for us that earlier Jesus who was fun to be with, and could be the life and soul of the party. ■

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**Korean Franciscan Brotherhood:** http://myhome.netsgo.com/kfb93/

**Celebrating Common Prayer:** www.oremus.org/liturgy/ccp/

**Celebrating Common Prayer 2000 Ordo:** www.justus.anglican.org/~ss/ccp/

**Exciting Holiness:** www.oremus.org/liturgy/e-h/

✦  
**Church of England:** www.church-of-england.org/

**Anglican Communion:** www.anglicancommunion.org/



## Book Reviews

Alexander Ryrie  
**Silent Waiting:**

*The Biblical roots of contemplative spirituality*  
Canterbury Press Norwich, 1999, £8.99  
ISBN 1-85311-257-7

The title is apt. Part One gives an introduction to the subject and to Old Testament spirituality in general, followed by a detailed exposition of words, chiefly from the psalms, which indicate a contemplative way of prayer. References to meditation, the 'night season', silence and standing still before God fill out the theme of waiting.

This waiting, we are told, is not a passive state but a sacrificial act of faith that God will act; and a hopeful looking forward even in desolation and calamity. Further, the waiting is not simply for action to provide, deliver or heal, but a yearning for God as Godself – for a taste of Presence, not just of benefits bestowed. Ryrie gives a chapter on the subject of God's activity; and Part One ends with a discussion on encounter – the Face of God.

Part Two brings us fully into our own lives, reminding us of Christian traditions of meditation and contemplation, with emphasis on pondering in the heart, letting go all else and simply being there, waiting. I was reminded of the Orthodox saying, 'Every morning I bring my mind into my heart and stand in the presence of God.' Paradoxes are recognised, not least that of presence in absence.

This is a scholarly book, but very readable. It gave me two things in particular: a strong sense of continuity in the search for God, among human beings and especially in our Jewish forebears in faith; and an impulse toward a resolve in 'silent waiting'.

Elizabeth CSI

Maureen Henderson  
**Friends on the Way:**

*A life enriched by engagement with people of many faiths*  
Epworth Press, London, 1999, £8.95  
ISBN 0-7162-0529-7

Maureen Henderson, described by Bishop Roy Williamson in his foreword as 'a practitioner rather than a theorist' has given us a personal and courageous account of her engagement with people of 'other faith traditions' from the early 1980s until the time of writing.

Bound up with this exciting story of meetings with Sikhs, Moslems, Jewish people, and those of the Hindu traditions, the setting up of interfaith groups, and the fostering of relationships between those of widely differing cultures, is the diary of Maureen's own pilgrimage, membership of an Anglican religious order working in East Africa as a nurse, the return of the order to England and the search for ministry consonant with her personal vocation; the discovery of this making of friendships with those from the minority ethnic groups in the West Midlands

and then in South London; eventually the painful departure from her order to the life of a consecrated solitary in Surrey.

Theorist or not, Maureen provides us, in chapter 19, with a taste of her theology which could well have come at the beginning of the book – and alas, having whetted our appetites for more knowledge of 'other faiths', no list of books for suggested further reading is provided. As well as a practitioner, she is an enthusiast (the reader is out of breath when page 160 is reached); she leaves us breathless and with the feeling that among us there have grown up in the post-war years untold riches of spiritual heritage which are now a part of English heritage!

Anselm SSF

Henri Nouwen  
**Return of the Prodigal:**

*A story of homecoming (Tapes)*  
DLT, London, (1992 hdbk), 1997, £10.95  
ISBN 0-232-52163-8

'A Lent Course to stimulate the mind' but, above all, 'a Lent Course to touch the heart and help people to engage with the nature of God in new and deeper ways' is how I would describe Henri Nouwen's five-week, taped Course. As it stands, the Course is easy to use – listen to the tape and discuss the question – but the format is confusing and there are too many questions for in-depth discussion, so the material is best adapted to your particular needs.

As the course looks at the various characters in the parable and in Rembrandt's painting, emotions are stirred and people shared some very real and deep experiences which helped them move into a deeper relationship with God. The Course is based on Henri Nouwen's book, so it is very helpful for the leader to have read the whole book and to have spent time with the painting beforehand.

By the end of the course, most people had

imbibed truths about God's love that they had known and believed before but had never 'owned' in such a deep and personal way, so that God's love became more real than it had been. This helped us all with the challenge in the last part of the Course – the call to be the Father – the call to be God's love to others.

Mary Judson, St Luke's, Pallion

A Carthusian  
**Poor Therefore Rich:**  
*Carthusian Novice Conferences*

DLT, London, 1999, £9.95  
ISBN 0-232-52316-9

This further example of succinct, accurate teaching from those who speak little and know the value of words, will be of special usefulness to Franciscans with their profession of poverty. For it traces the concept and practice through the Scriptures and the history of the Church with both a realism and a relatedness. The realism is about the experience of belonging to one another in generous responsibility; the relatedness is to the God on whom the *ananawim* (poor/poor in spirit) depend and to whom they remain open. I found the candour in the description of how the Carthusian life has fared through the centuries refreshing. But most of all, the marriage of intellectual integrity and the devotion of the heart makes this a model of instruction that I wish we could follow more.

Bernard SSF

Compiled by Robert Atwell  
**Celebrating the Saints:**  
*Daily spiritual readings for the Calendar of the Church of England*  
Canterbury Press Norwich, 1998, £18.99  
ISBN 1 85311 218 6

**Celebrating the Seasons:**  
*Daily spiritual readings for the Christian Year*  
Canterbury Press Norwich, 1999, £18.99  
ISBN 1-85311-249-6

Those of us whose spiritual routine revolves around the Daily Office and Eucharist have the opportunity to reflect on at least six substantial scripture readings each day, and Christians of all traditions are encouraged more than ever to read their Bibles. All well and good, for the Scriptures lie at the heart of the Christian faith, but across the world and down through two millennia, Christians have reflected on the meanings and implications of these same Scriptures, and we have much to learn from what has been written by them. Thus, as Robert Atwell points out, the use of non-Scriptural readings in public worship has become increasingly common in recent years but is no innovation, St Benedict for instance having included the practice in his *Rule*.

Robert Atwell has compiled these twin volumes in order to make the riches of such writings available in a convenient form to worshipping communities and ordinary Christian individuals. *Celebrating the Saints* thus provides appropriate material for the new Calendar of Saints of the Church of England, whilst *Celebrating the Seasons* in a similar

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# C/SSF European Province Prayer Diary

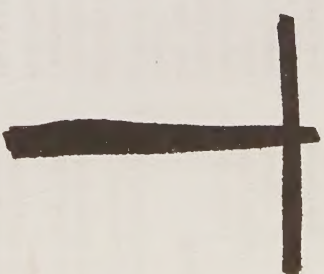
MAY 2000		
1-14	Martin, Chris, Christopher, Kate Allan TSSF	Mission, St Thomas, Leigh
2	Christine James	Headmasters' Wives' Quiet Day, Compton Durville
2-6	John Francis	Hayleybury School
2-7	Kevin	Parish Visit, Ystradgynlais
3	Tristram	Hadleigh Deanery Synod, Leigh-on-Sea
5	Tristram	CPN Advisory Group, Blackfries
5-7	Martin	Parish Retreat, St Peter's Bushy Heath, Hemmelford Grey
7	Angelo	Preach, Our Most Holy Redeemer, Clerkenwell
7	Tristram	Preach, St Mary's, Portsea
8-10		Guardians' Meeting, Freetland
9	Judith Ann	St Luke, Endon Mothers' Union
9-10	Joyce	Conference of Religious Executive, Roehampton
9-10	Tristram	Liturgical Commission, Ely
9-12		TSSF Working Week, Hilfield
11	Jason	Vocations' Team Meeting, London
12	Jason	Life Profession, Hilfield
12-14	Jackie	TSSF Retreat, Compton Durville
12-14	Rowan Clare	'Rest Awhile' Retreat, Hilfield
12-22	Sue, Helen Julian, Wayne, Robert Redding TSSF	Parish Mission, St Barnabas, Northolt Park
12-22	Desmond Alban, David Francis, Moyra, Michael Buck TSSF	Parish Mission, Woodhall, Leeds
13	Elizabeth	TSSF Quiet Day, Sheldon, Derbyshire
13	Samuel	Speak, Locking Deanery Synod
13-15	Reginald	Parish Visit, Lecomb Regis
14	Paschal	Quiet Day, Clergy Chapter, Shepherds Dene
14-19	Phyllis	Exeter Diocese Mothers' Union Retreat, Compton Durville
17	Bernard	SSF Central Fund Trustees' Meeting, London
18	Vincent	Spiritual Directors, Lamehouse
18-21	Angelo	National Garden Scheme - Hilfield Friary 'Secret Garden'
19-21	Jonathan, Rowan Clare	Parish Weekend, St Mary, Milton Regis
19-21	Rowan Clare	Justice & Peace Links Conference, Ditchingham
23	Rowan Clare	Clergy Quiet Day, Compton Durville
24	Chris, Jennie, Joyce, Malcolm, Tristram	General Chapter Planning Group, Stepey
25	Franciscan Communities' Council, London	
27	Angelo	Franciscan Editorial Board, Stepey
27	Martin	Preach, Patronal Festival, St Augustine & St Saviour, Brighton
28	Christine James, Joyce, Tristram	Preach, Godmanchester
30		Incipient ARC, London
JUNE 2000		
1-3		CSF Provincial Chapter, Compton Durville
2-5	Phyllis	Pre-mission visit, Bitterne Park
3	Sue	Quiet Day, St Peter's Tiverton & Chelthorne
5		C/SSF Joint Provincial Chapters' Meeting, Compton Durville
6		SSF Provincial Chapter, Hilfield
6-9	Sue	SSF Brothers' Provincial General Chapter, Hilfield
8		South Petherton Mothers' Union
9-10		SSF Provincial Chapter, Hilfield
10	Reginald	Compton Durville Open Day
10	Compton Sisters	Devon Companions' Meeting, Honiton
11	Augustine Thomas	Pentecost 2000 Festival, Yeovil
11	Philip Bartholomew	Preach, St Stephen's Rednal
11	Reginald	Blessing as new Guardian of Hilfield
14-16	Sue	Preach, Honiton
15	Angelo	Vows' Conference, Swanwick
15-21	Alan Michael	Chamminer Mothers' Union
16-18	Jackie	Diocese of Vasterås, Sweden
17		Parish Weekend, St Bartholomew's, Allen's Cross
17	Athanasius	Holy Island Music Course, Compton Durville
		Companions' Day, Hilfield
		UK Melanesian Mission Festival, All Saints', Bristol

JULY 2000		
1	Angelo	Keynote Speaker, National Pilgrimage, Glastonbury
1	Joyce	Womenspace Study Day, Freetland
2	Samuel	Preach, Ordination Service, Winchester Cathedral
5	Teresa	St Giles Newcastle-under-Lyme Mothers' Union
5-6	Martin	Forward-in-Faith Conference, Ditchingham
7-9	Tristram	Youth Camp Planning Meeting, Compton Durville
7-11		General Synod York
8	Angelo	Summer Festival, Hilfield
8	Angelo	Noon, Eucharistic Speaker, CR Commemoration Day
8	Angelo	Evening, St Richard's, Ham
8	Sue	Readers Fellowship Quiet Day, Compton Durville
9	Samuel	Preach, Millennium Festival Service, Wimborne Minster
9-10	Beverley	Provincial Engagements' Group, Glastonbury
10		Springboard, Wakefield
11-13	Tristram	Senior Brothers' Peer Group, Stepey
12-14	Beverley	Annual Conference, Oxford
14-15	Tristram	Springboard, Wakefield
14-15	Jackie	Talks, All Saints' Sisters of the Poor, Oxford
15	Jackie	Quiet Day, Carbis Bay
16	Judith Ann	Preach, St Ives
18		Bishop's Certificate Group, Stoke on Trent
18-22	Bernard	Art & Prayer Week, Walthamstow
19	Tristram	Urban Churches Group, Walthamstow
19-21	Tristram	Liturgical Commission, Salisbury
22		TSSF Day, Hilfield
24-2 Aug	Sue & Dick Maxwell TSSF	TSSF Retreat, Compton Durville
28-7 Aug	Kevin, Malcolm, Jackie, Oswin Paul	Families' Camp, Hilfield
30	Augustine Thomas	Preach, St Martin's Fenny Stratford
AUGUST 2000		
5	Christine James	Quiet Day, 'Let there be Light', Compton Durville
5	Rowan Clare, Christopher	Youth Camp, Hilfield
11-21	Martin	Preach, St Clare's Festival, Denby Abbey
12	Phyllis	Ecumenical Teaching Order Quiet Day, Compton Durville
12	Christine James	Borrow Parish Away Day, Compton Durville
19	Helen Julian	Yeovil Baptist Church
20	Augustine Thomas	Assisting with a pilgrimage to Oberammergau
24-2 Sep	Bernard	Greenbelt Spiritual Directors, Cheltenham
25-28	Bernard	Kent Companions
31-4 Sep	Vincent	



Pray for the repose of the soul of **BROTHER HARRY SSF**, who died on 13 January 2000. He was aged seventy-one and in the twenty-seventh year of his profession in vows; and for the repose of the soul of **SISTER MARY DOROTHEA PCRep**, who died on 29 January 2000. She was aged eighty-three and in the twenty-eighth year of her profession in vows.

# THE SOCIETY OF SAINT FRANCIS



Brothers and Sisters, pray for us . . .

Almighty God,  
whose Son, our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ,  
was moved with compassion for all who had gone astray  
and with indignation for all who had suffered wrong;  
incline our hearts with the burning fire of your love,  
that we may seek out the lost,  
have mercy on the fallen  
and stand fast for truth and righteousness;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

A Prayer for the Feast of the Divine Compassion  
by Eric Milner-White

## And for our departed Brothers & Sisters

May	
8	Mary CSCI 1975
15	Caroline Mary CSCI 1981
16	Beatrice CSCI 1989
16	Angela Mary CSF 1998
27	Arthur de Winton SSF 1948
June	
3	James SSF 1982
5	John Shaw SSF 1975
20	John Baptist OSF 1922
27	John SSF 1988
	Frederick SSF 1990
July	
1	Barbara CSF 1998
5	Mary Grace CSF 1954
7	Mary Christine PCRep 1932
August	
3	Adrian SSF 1979
19	Desmond SSF 1992
27	Andrew OSF 1946
July (continued)	
10	Agnes Mary CSF 1983
14	Mary Michael PCRep 1980
16	Martin Raymond OSF 1952
18	Michael Davis SSF 1989
20	Derek SSF 1979
21	Anthony SSF 1972
26	Kathleen CSCI 1960
27	Leonore CSF 1997
31	Jonathan SSF 1982
	Nicholas SSF 1983
	Irene CSCI 1989



THE SOCIETY OF ST FRANCIS

1 THE BISHOPS PROTECTOR  
Richard Appleby Protector General  
& Australia New Zealand  
George Connor Deputy, New Zealand  
Thomas Ray SSF America  
Michael Scott-Joynt Europe  
Walter Siba Pacific Islands  
Tevita Talanoa Deputy, PNG

THE FIRST ORDER

2 THE MINISTERS  
Daniel Minister General SSF  
Teresa Minister General CSF  
Andrew Manu Solomon Islands Region  
Clifton Henry Papua New Guinea Region  
Colin Wilfred  
Australia New Zealand Province  
Damian SSF European Province  
Joyce CSF European Province  
Justus SSF American Province  
Pamela Clare CSF American Province

AMERICA

3 BROOKLYN  
Anthony Michael (Stroud)  
Derek, Guardian  
John George  
Justus

MT. SINAI, Long Island

4 SAN FRANCISCO San Damiano  
Antonio Sato  
Jude, Guardian, Provincial Secretary  
Robert Hugh  
Thomas  
Novice:  
Guire

SAN FRANCISCO St Francis House

Catherine Joy  
Cecilia, Provincial Secretary  
Elizabeth Ann, Novice Guardian  
Jean  
Pamela Clare  
Ruth (Family Link)

AUSTRALIA/NEW ZEALAND

5 AUSTRALIA  
BRISBANE  
Daniel  
Donald Campbell, Guardian  
Francis  
Lionel  
Peter-Christian  
William

STROUD

Bruce-Paul, Novice Guardian,  
Provincial Secretary  
Novice:  
Graham

NEW ZEALAND

6 AUCKLAND - Long Bay  
Andrew Philip  
Brian  
Colin Wilfred, Guardian  
Damian Kenneth  
Jerry Ross  
Novice:  
Jeffrey Francis

ON DETACHED SERVICE

Alfred Boonkong (Malaysia)  
Christopher John (Korea)  
Noel-Thomas (Sydney)

ON LEAVE

Masseo

EUROPE

ALNMOUTH

David Stephen  
Edward  
Gregory, Guardian  
Nathanael  
Oswin Paul  
Paschal  
Novice:  
Wayne

BIRMINGHAM - St Clare's House

Alan Michael, Guardian  
Benjamin (Harborne)  
Desmond Alban  
Novices:  
Augustine Thomas  
David Alban

BIRMINGHAM - St Francis House

Alison Mary  
Angela Helen  
Gwenfryd Mary (Milford Haven)  
Hilary, Provincial & General Secretary  
Maureen  
Moyra  
Veronica

BURGHWALLIS

Austin  
Nicholas Alan

CAMBRIDGE

Alistair  
Anselm  
Dominic Christopher  
Martin  
Michael, Guardian

COMPTON DURVILLE

Beverley  
Christine James  
Helen Julian, Sister-in-Charge,  
Novice Guardian  
Jackie  
Jennie  
Phyllis  
Rowan Clare  
Sue

EDINBURGH

Kentigern John

GLASGOW

Amos, Brother in Charge  
Robert Coombes  
Ronald (Saltcoats)

GLASSHAMPTON

Benedict, Guardian  
David Francis, Novice Guardian  
Malcolm  
Ramon  
Raymond Christian  
Wilfrid (Hereford)  
Novices:  
Edward James  
Jason Matthias  
Lincoln Harvey  
Stephen  
Stuart

HILFIELD

Aidan  
Athanasius Faifu  
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Paul  
Philip Bartholomew  
Raphael (Dorchester)  
Reginald  
Samuel, Guardian  
Tristram  
Vincent

LONDON - Britton

Gina  
Joyce  
Nan  
Rose

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Angelo, Provincial Secretary  
Damian  
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AFRICA

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ON LEAVE

David  
Hugo  
Matthew  
Nolan Tobias  
Peter Douglas  
Philip

PACIFIC ISLANDS

Papua New Guinea Region  
CHINATOWN, LAE

Cecil Okun  
Clifton Henry  
Gilson Kira, Regional Bursar  
Peter Kevin  
Selwyn Suma, Guardian

DIPOTURU

Timothy Joseph  
GOROKA - SIOMOROMORO  
Andrew (Melanesian Institute)  
Daniel Gorua

Novices:

Benstead Ponoba  
Mishael Eruga

HARURO

Anthony  
Benjamin Tapio (School of Nursing)  
Bray Ungaua  
Charles Iada  
Leonard Richardson  
Hugh  
Laurence Hauje  
Lester  
Lester Meso  
Moses Vavakadiba  
Oswald, Guardian  
Philip Etobae (Newton College)

25 HAUTAMBU - Little Portion  
Robert Briel, Brother in Charge  
Winston Paoni  
Novice:  
Bartholomew Maravovo

TEMOTU

Manasseh Birahu, Brother in Charge  
Davidson Warisimae  
Novice:  
Charles Vavaki

ON LEAVE

Shedrick Inu  
Moses Lonsdale

THE SECOND ORDER

The Community of St Clare  
at Freeland, UK

THE THIRD ORDER

THE MINISTERS  
Keith Slater, Minister General &  
Australia  
Dorothy Brooker, New Zealand  
Anita Catron, America  
Carolyn Clapperton, Europe  
Anne Kotzé, Africa  
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1 May 2000



Address changes & intercessions for the  
next edition of this leaflet should be sent



way provides readings for every day of the year, complementing the scriptural readings of the Revised Common Lectionary.

Breadth and ecumenical inclusiveness are marks of the new Church of England Calendar and the same virtues are reflected in the selections of readings in these books. Thus the ancient Fathers of the Church are represented, but so also are writers through the ages right up to the twentieth century, and of various traditions and perspectives. Readings rarely exceed five-hundred words (with suggested omissions if they do) making them accessible for the busy people who wish to explore their Christian roots. *Celebrating the Saints* also includes useful, brief biographical sketches, largely reproduced from those in Brother Cristam SSF's *Exciting Holiness* (of which it is a sister volume). The two books have already proved themselves to be valuable resources for many.

*Desmond Alban SSF*

Michael Manktelow

John Moorman

Canterbury Press Norwich, 1999, £12.99

ISBN 1-85311-310-7

It is probably true to say that Bishop John Moorman has not hitherto been given the recognition that is due to him. This new biography will help the reader to understand something of the character of a truly great bishop, pastor and scholar. Its author, Michael Manktelow, knew him well and has also carried out extensive research, as the copious footnotes and bibliography reveal.

Moorman's quiet influence on the students at Chichester Theological College, where he was Principal for ten years, as also his work as a pastor during sixteen years as Bishop of Ripon, have endeared him to many. His outstanding ecumenical work (especially as the Anglican Observer at Vatican II) made him stand out as one of the great figures of twentieth century Christendom. The inauguration of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC) owes a great deal to John's patient work.

Readers of this biography will soon discover that John Moorman was a man of principle. Those who would disagree with him can hardly fail to respect his integrity. During the 1939-1945 War he refused attractive preferment within the Church because so many of his friends had to make great sacrifices; instead, he went to work on the land, offering his services as a priest at weekends. Another example, of a different kind, was his opposition on grounds of conscience to the Anglican-Methodist Scheme of 1968. He was particularly sad because it led to a difference of opinion between himself and his great friend Michael Ramsey.

Brother Douglas was one of John's heroes, to whom he devoted a chapter in a book which he wrote not long before he died in 1989 (but which, sadly, was never published). John had heard him preach at Leighton Buzzard when he was a young curate and this had made a deep impression on him.

In the midst of an exceedingly busy life, he

always found time to devote to scholarship in depth, and his real love was the study of Franciscan history. In this sphere he became widely known as an international expert, and his *A History of the Franciscan Order* is regarded as a standard work.

*Martin SSF*

Richard Holloway

Godless Morality

Canongate Books, Edinburgh, 1999, £9.99

ISBN 0-86241-909-3

Holloway's starting point is: 'Many religious leaders say that without a belief in God and in absolute standards there can be no genuine moral conduct; that the moral confusions of our own time are directly related to the erosion of religion in Western society', which is then relentlessly challenged throughout the book. He attempts to separate morality and ethics from belief and claims that the only sure way of assessing moral or immoral behaviour is whether or not the action 'manifestly harms others or their interests, or violates their rights or causes injustice.' He points out that debating with religious people on this subject can be very frustrating because they tend to move imperceptibly from moral to religious discourse and, ultimately, fall back on divine command as the clinching factor. He suggests a radically new approach to morality, recommending that we apply a versatility to life themes by relating these to the experience of jazz, joining in the music, listening and adapting to one another, keeping the melody flowing. He searches for a 'new moral ecumenism that would unite people on the basis of an agreed human ethic.'

Holloway uses contentious examples such as drugs, sex and sexuality, artificial insemination, abortion and euthanasia to illustrate his hypothesis. He views such complex issues from a number of angles and applies intellectual rigour in a convincing way, I believe. 'We should not shirk the task of rethinking the authority of the Bible over our lives, allowing the living Scripture of our own experience to challenge the dead letter of the written law', he urges.

*John Fox TSSF*

J Hoerberichts

Francis and Islam

Franciscan Press, Quincy USA, \$14.95

(also available from Franciscan Study

Centre, Canterbury)

ISBN 0-8199-0980-7

Dr Hoerberichts is a secular Roman Catholic who taught theology for many years at a seminary in Karachi, Pakistan. His knowledge of Franciscanism in relation to other faiths and the difficulties of dialogue between Christianity and Islam led him to look closely at Francis' part in the Crusades, his visit to the Sultan and the resulting 'mission chapter' in the Rule of 1221.

He brings out the revolutionary approach of Francis: 'of not engaging in arguments but to be subject to every human creature for God's sake' (Rule of 1221, 16.6). His thorough analysis of the mission chapter shows how

Francis had seen that the humble witness of a Christian, prepared to be subject to the Muslims, was more eloquent than the violence of the Crusaders. And then to 'proclaim the word of God when they see it pleases the Lord.' It may be hard for us to live this way in these times; and it is certain that the early Franciscans did not understand Francis, for the mission chapter was all but deleted from the later Rule of 1223.

Hoerberichts goes on to show how the modern Church has not learned from Francis. After a promising start to this pontificate, when the Pope even quoted from the Koran, the brakes have been put on 'inculturation' and he relates how the Asian Bishops have increasingly had their hands tied.

This book is for those interested in Franciscan studies, and for those involved in inter-faith work.

*Austin SSF*

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# Brother Harry SSF, RIP

*a sermon preached at his requiem mass  
by Brother Damian SSF*

'Mine is the silver and mine the gold', says the Lord of hosts, 'and the glory of this latter house shall surpass the glory of the former; and in this place I will grant prosperity and peace.' (Haggai 2.8-9)

*Brother Harry SSF  
died on 13 January 2000  
and his funeral mass was at  
Alnmouth Parish Church.*

*He was aged seventy-one  
and in the twenty-seventh  
year of his profession in  
vows.*

Brother Harry had planned today to be in London for another meeting relating to the Religious Communities Fund which he served as Treasurer on behalf of the Anglican Religious Communities. He had been managing this Fund through some stormy waters with unaffected precision and poise, and had talked with me late last year with open concern for his duties. It turned out to be the last conversation we had. Also in London today, Harry would have planned to continue his investigation into his family tree, a subject that has been his hobby and interest over several years. His task may have been simpler than for many for he had no living family when he died only thirteen days into this new Millennium. As a bursar, he most certainly earned a silver medal; as a Brother in this Franciscan family, he was gold.

Allow me to trace back some of Harry's own life. He was born on 28 September 1928 in Ashton-under-Lyne, the second child of Albert and Lena Marshall. His sister, Lily, was seven when Harry came along. Those depression years, felt so keenly in the North of England, meant that Harry's growing-up opportunities were quite limited and he left Ashton Secondary Modern School in the midst of the Second World War. But in 1946, aged eighteen, he joined the RAF at Cosford, doing six years, first at home, training as an airframe mechanic, and then he went on to Ceylon thoroughly to enjoy himself with those flying-boat transport planes: perhaps these were among the happiest days of his life.

These were also formative days where the Spirit of God touched his life distinctly. He was confirmed in the RAF and built up a determination to study and read, so that when he returned to civilian life in 1952 and had become an insurance agent, he also signed on for correspondence courses and evening classes to attain four 'O' Levels and an 'A' in Religious Knowledge. This gave him access

to be trained as a Lay Reader in the Manchester Diocese, where he was admitted as a Reader in 1957. He had already become a server at his local Church and sat on the Diocesan Committee of the Church of England Men's Society.

Harry Marshall was instinctively part of the Church. Though it was not his family's tradition in that post-war era of recovery and concern for secular stability, Harry sparkled within his local community. We might imagine him full of that sense of fun and adventure, youth-hostelling, cycling, joining in and, as a Churchman, introducing that love of the Lord that landed him finally, after his career with British Rail as a clerical officer, towards a vocation as a Franciscan.

Harry had been a Brother since 1970 – nearly 30 years. We love him not simply because he made us laugh, but also because he was completely himself! The reason we are all here today to show our regard and respect for a truly humble friar is because, I suspect, you knew where you were with him. He really did think very little of himself and he never quite understood how much he was valued and loved. People were immensely fond of this entirely non-threatening, self-effacing gentle Brother. Visitors to Alnmouth Friary would enquire immediately, "How's Harry?" He was always there, available, interested; and folk met him as an entirely reliable person. At meetings of the local Council of Churches, he was always there. With Companions and Tertiaries he was conscientious and affirming. And he was so easy to tease . . .

Evidently, because of the somewhat inadequate wall-partitioning up on the top floor of the Friary, it is inevitable that we overhear some of the more personal conversations next door! Out of the sleepy greater silence kept by the brothers in the early light of day was heard the voice of our Brother as he rose to open his curtain, "Good morning, pigeon; good morning, seagull!" There would be a moment's silence, then again, "Now, Marshall," he'd say to himself, "Where did you put yer teeth." The morning ablutions completed, he would arrive just in time at the chapel door before the *Angelus* was rung. His was a formal, confident entry into chapel, and checking his appearance and removing that imaginary bit of fluff from his capuce in quick successive brushes of the hand, he introduced the morning office: 'The Lord almighty grant us a quiet night and a perfect end.'

One of Harry's great joys was a glass of cider – but a glass and a half one famous lunch time down here in the village proved imprudent as he hit the bracing fresh air off the North Sea. The memory of him, fast asleep in the Friary hall, legs thrown over the arm of the chair, and massive brown boots hanging down and looking as if they belonged to somebody else!

How happy, the Gospel declares are the poor

in spirit, the gentle, the pure in heart: they shall see God (*Matt 5*). I asked Brother Daniel how long Harry might have to spend in purgatory. "Only until 3rd October when St Francis would collect him at the Gate of Heaven"! And he added, remembering Harry's employment with British Rail, "and if he misses that connection, he would be able to meet up with Father Algy on 23rd November"! Yes, the glory of the latter house shall surpass the glory of the former. And we rise today from our sadness and grief to an awareness of the true treasures of life – that through the merits of Jesus the Christ, and from our devotion and loving service offered through him, we trust God will take us on in our journey of faith and show us, as St John's epistle states, how we are to become like him and to see him as he really is (*1 John 1*).

One last story about Harry when he appeared on a television programme with Gary Rhodes. Harry, this time in the rôle of bread-maker, was given the task of being a busy brother, kneading the dough on the kitchen table, making up the daily tally of loaves, while Brother Peter Douglas and Gary were creating some delectable dish on the same work table around the Aga cooker. The action was meant to be with Gary and Peter, but as the camera followed the ingredients, so Harry shuffled round, following the eye of the camera to stay in focus, edging his way round the table and throwing the dough with masterly thrusts of energy, to stay in the picture!

Harry, that's just how it was. You were always there, busy with your responsibilities, painstakingly working for the common good – with the dough, with the silver, with the concerns of your heart for the best for everyone. So just as St Peter spoke at the Beautiful Gate beside the Temple in Jerusalem, we, your brothers and like you also, have no silver or gold of our own; yet, what we have we give to you, our thanks, our love, our prayers, that you may walk now towards your reward in heaven, for in that place will be granted you prosperity and peace. ■



*Brother Harry SSF*